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Red Rose Atari Members Newsletter

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JUNE 1987

RED ROSE ATARI MEMBERS (R.A.M.) is an organization of ATARI computer enthusiasts. The General meeting is held on the second TUESDAY of the month at MILLERSVILLE STUDENT ACTIVITY building at 7:00 P.M. Any and all articles in this newsletter may be reprinted so long as formal credit is given to the original source.

The club Board meetings will be held on the fourth TUESDAY of the month at 7:30.

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PLEASE NOTE!!

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"It is the policy of this organization that software pirating and theft of intellectual property is incompatible with the goals of R.A.M. Any member found pirating software at organizational events will be expelled." (Re: R.A.M. Constitution.)

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Greeting everyone. Well once again I seem to be writing this column at the eleventh hour. No matter how hard I try to sit down and write this column earlier in the month, it never seems to happen. Unfortunately, this month has been a very hectic one for me. As a matter of fact, this is the first chance I've had to sit down with the Atari since last month's column.

Now that the summer is just about here it's time once again to start planning for the club picnic. Although I don't have a firm date right now, it will probably be in the latter part of July. We plan to hold it at Long's Park at one of the pavilion's like we did last year.

For all of you Flight Simulator enthusiasts out there, the second book in the Flight Simulator Co-Pilot Series by Charles Gulick is out in the bookstores now. This one's entitled "Runway USA" and covers the set of Western Scenery Disks along with a number of adventures covering the San Francisco Star Scenery disk. The adventures in this book build upon the skills learned in the first book "Flight Simulator Co-Pilot". There are a number of new skills including some advanced aerobatics which are covered in Runway USA. Although there is a brief appendix in Runway USA covering some of these skills, I would recommend you work through the first book if your a newcomer to flying the simulator.

One item of note for any of you ST hardware hackers out there. The June issue of Byte magazine has a hardware project in it for building an interface board which hooks into the ST through the cartridge port. In addition, the theme of the July issue is on computer aided design (CAD) applications, which may be of interest to any of you who use CAD-3D.

One final item of possible interest is an ad that I recently ran across in Computer Shopper magazine. Seems someone is selling a 5,000 foot Centronics parallel printer cable with amplifier for anyone who is tired of being limited by a 10 foot cable from their computer to their printer. Now my printer does make some noise when it's printing out, but I really haven't felt that it was severe enough to move it to the next county. I'm sure a mile long Centronics cable would have some industrial uses, but I'm a little hard pressed to figure out one for it here at my house. Nevertheless, if you need one longer than 10 feet you might want to check it out.

See you at the June meeting.

Rick Maynard

SHORT NOTES

By
Jim Stokes

WELCOME to Short Notes, a series of unrelated items intended to provide news and information about your 8 bit or ST Atari computer. If you have any comments or suggestions give me a call at 872-9048 or leave me a message on JIM'S CO-OP at 872-6068

The Atari 1200 baud modem, that works with both the 8 bit and ST, is still not available, I've heard that the current hold-up is because it failed the FCC test but don't know for sure. When Atari first announced this modem it was thought to be a price breakthrough but, by the time they finally get this product out, the rest of the industry will have probably caught up to and surpassed Atari. Already I've heard of a 2400 baud modem that will retail for \$200 (the mailorder price will probably be around \$170) and be available by mid-summer.

If you own an XM301 modem there is something you might want to check, the XM301 has a number of bare wires in the case that can short out and destroy your peripherals while the modem continues to work flawlessly. To fix it you need to unplug the modem and remove the two screws that hold the case together, carefully lift the board off the two legs that hold it in place (by gently rocking it back and forth) and cut the bare ends of the four wires that are un-connected and then put tape over the those ends. I checked an XM301 that I have and found only one wire that was long enough to cause troubles (the others were only a 16th of an inch long) but that may vary from modem to modem.

I've heard that the Megas won't be available until September 1st, no reason was given for the delay but I've heard from another source that Atari hasn't been able to find good (non-mushy) keyboards at the right price so that may have something to do with it. The Megas will have the Blitter installed and a new rom that will fix some bugs and speed up disk formatting. Also there will be no Mega 1, that has been dropped in favor of the 1040 which is essentially the same machine in a different package. In addition you will begin seeing the STFM, it is essentially a 520 in a 1040 case. It will have 512k of ram, a built in single sided drive, built in power supplies and RF modulator. It's thought that Atari can cut production costs by eliminating some of the differences between the two systems. The STFM is available now on the west coast and will appear here after the supply of the old STs are exhausted.

Regent Software (developers of Atari Writer and Atari Writer Plus) are working on software to support the new XEP80 (the 8 bit 80 column card) and it's expected that the 80 column card won't be in wide distribution until it is finished. People who have seen the XEP80 in action have said that it is painfully slow because it plugs into the joystick port. ICD has an 80 column card (\$99 plus the Multi i/o board at \$199) that has been done for months but hasn't been released because their word processing software isn't complete. The ICD 80 column card is much faster but much more expensive unless you want the features the Multi I/O board provides. ICD also sells the AFA 80 Column board for the 800 only, it replaces one of your 16k memory cartridges. The AFA 80 sells for \$99 and probably requires a 32k memory card to bring the 800 back up to 48k. I've heard that the AFA 80 is really a repackaged Bit 3 board

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which was available for the Atari a few years back

Atari and the author of the 8 bit emulator for the ST have finally reached an agreement and it should be available soon Until we see the final version we won't know how useful it is but it will be public domain

If your interested in IBM compatibility for your ST there is a new product that is going to be available soon, it's called PC DITTO. This is a software emulator so it will be slower and less compatible than a hardware emulator but it will also be cheaper They have tested PC DITTO with 400 different IBM software packages and found only Basic A wouldn't run, it was able to run Flight Simulator and dBase III plus, thought to be two of the toughest I have a list of programs that are said to run with PC DITTO, check with me at the next meeting if your interested in more information PC DITTO will be available June 1st and will sell for \$89.95, it's available from Avant Garde Systems at (904)-221-2904 PC DITTO is not copy protected and will work on monochrome or color systems

The fate of the IBM box for the ST remains in doubt, Atari maintains they are still working on it but I've heard from other knowledgeable sources that it has been dropped At any rate there are a number of other companies working on a similar system for the ST including someone working on an AT clone

If you use Atari Writer Plus but are not thrilled with Dos 2.5 there is a way to use it with your favorite dos The AW+ programs themselves are not copy protected, only the disk is, so all you need to do is boot your favorite dos and make a copy of Atari Writer Plus You can then binary load AW+ from drive two, after the program loads it will check drive one for the original disk with the bad sector so it must be placed in drive one If you only have one drive your only option is to write a new dos to you Atari Writer Plus disk, this is a little risky but a workable solution

Broderbund is working on ST Printshop, a completely reworked version of the 8 bit favorite, a copy of it was shown at the Dallas Computer Fest last month, there has been no information on price or availability at this time

I've finally figured out how to get ST Writer to print to disk without all the dead space normally associated with it Simply replace the formatting commands across the top of the file with the following:

Control B1 Control L0 Control R79 Control T0 Control Y1

This will print to disk without a number of blank screens at the end and use the full width of the screen. Make sure you don't set B to 0 since this will print to disk but the file will have 0 bytes You can change the margins, just don't use set the right margin to 80 since it may force a blank line in the output file if you have a character in the 80th position

There have been a number of complaints about the newer ST color monitors not being as good as the originals (the older monitors have a darker gray faceplate and were made by JVC), so Atari is working on a kit to bring these newer monitors up to snuff According to Neal Harris, the newer monitors are just as good as the older ones, the problem is Gold Star produced a large number of the newer monitors which were not properly aligned These kits will be made available to dealers who can then re-align the Gold Star monitors

According to Electronic Arts president Trip Hawkins, we are not likely to see much more 8 bit software from them because sales of their new titles last year were awful

With their recent acquisition of Batteries Included they will continue to produce titles for the ST but we can expect to see BI creativity/productivity software go to a key/disk system (where the original disk must be in drive one), at the present time BI software is not copy protected.

»NOTICE«

If you havent been able to find ST LOG locally check out THE LITTLE PROFESSOR BOOK STORE in the CENTERVILLE SHOPPING CENTER, they carry it. Thanks to Tom Hall for letting us know about this

Don't
forget the
Meeting
June 9th at
7:00P.m.

Karate Kid II: A Review
or
So Close and Yet So Far

Review by Eric Fulmer
For the ST color only, joystick recommended
NEXT MONTH: Mindshadow

If there's one thing that is really annoying, it's playing a game that is just on the brink of being wonderful, but has a few seemingly insignificant flaws that drive you crazy. Such is the case with Karate Kid II, an Englishgame by a company called MicroDeal, distributed in the U.S. by MichTron.

The game starts off well, though, with a title screen right off the videocassette cover. The two faces (Daniel and Myagi) look exactly like RalphMachio and Pat Moritta (the stars of the popular movie).

The one-player option of Karate Kid II follows the basic plot of the movie: you control Daniel, the hero, as he fights four ever-more-powerfuladversaries, eventually facing "The Chosen," an evil karate master of great skill. On the way, bonus rounds force you to learn the secret of Concentration (by trying to catch a fly with a pair of chopsticks) and the secret of Rhythm (by chopping through sheets of ice). Then, after defeating the Chosen, Daniel must learn the Secret of the Drum to destroy him. It has something to do withthe rhythm and concentration you supposedly learned earlier.

The two-player option allows you to face a human opponent in a series of matches. The first player to win three matches is the champion. The bonus rounds are attempted by each player, in turn. Player one takes the role of Daniel (always dressed in a white robe) and player two becomes Toshio and Taro, dressed in red or brown robes. However, my disk has a bug which doesn't allow player two to win at all. My game continues on until player one wins three matches.

The first two matches (in the one player version) take place in rooms of a Japanese mansion. The rooms are beautifully done, each containing a wallpainting of either a fish, a bird, a dragon, a tiger, or what looks like a woolly mammoth. Backgrounds include a window view of a beautiful bay, a mountain range, or a wooden footbridge. These interior scenes are really exceptional, and almost make the game worth buying in themselves. After you've won the first two matches, the Chopsticks bonus round begins. A bust of Myagi, Daniel's trainer, appears onscreen holding chopsticks. You use the joystick to move Myagi's arm and the fire button to close the chopsticks, trying to catch a fly that buzzes back and forth across the screen. This sequence is very tough, and seems to take forever. Many people who've played the game suggested that there should be a way to forfeit the bonus round, taking you directly to the next match. A good idea, no question. After the Chopsticks bonus round, the combat moves outdoors to Myagi's ruined Japanese garden. Two matches occur here, and the graphics are almost as nice as the interior scenes. After defeating Toshio and Taro in the garden, the Ice Breaking bonus round begins. It takes place in a cafe, with Daniel standing before a crowd of spectators. Six sheets of ice are lined up in front of him to be smashed. You must move your joystick back and forth very quickly, to speed the beating of an on screen drum (this is the "rhythm" you must learn). When you think the drum is beating fast enough, you press the joystick button to karate chop the six sheets of ice. How fast the drum was moving and how long you held in the joystick button determine how many sheets of ice you break. 500 points are awarded for each sheet broken. Once the Ice Breaking round is complete, the "Final Encounter"

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between Daniel and "The Chosen" begins. This match occurs at a ruined temple, complete with a large statue of Buddha and crumbling masonry all around. This screen, also, is beautifully drawn. The Chosen, dressed in blue robes, is certainly the toughest opponent. Surprisingly, however, it doesn't take long to learn how to beat him (Not that there's real strategy involved, but certain sequences of moves are more effective than others. These become obvious fairly quickly). As soon as the Chosen collapses from your devastating blows, a drum (similar to the one in the Ice Breaking bonus round) appears on-screen and the Chosen gets back up to face you. You must learn the drum's secret or the Chosen will punch your lights out. This is really tough to get onto, and requires some frantic joystick manipulation (Hint, hint). If you do manage to destroy the Chosen, you receive 5000 points and the game is over. So much for the sequence of play.

As I have mentioned, the background scenes for all the matches are exceptional. Even more so is the fact that the interior scenes are randomized and the wall paintings are independent of the window views. Thus, any of the five animal wall paintings can appear with any of the five window scenes, for a total of 25 different rooms. Besides the background graphics, the foreground depictions of the two opponents are excellent. The actions of each figure are clear, detailed and totally realistic. Remember last month, when I mentioned that I was impressed with Championship Wrestling's depiction of each move? Well, Karate Kid II far exceeds Championship Wrestling in the realism department. Each move is clearly different from the others and produces a unique reaction from your opponent. A roundhouse kick, for example, causes him to fall backwards onto the floor. But any type of blow landed on an opponent with his back turned forces him to his knees. To sum up: Graphically, the game cannot be beat. It's that simple.

Otherwise, however, there are some nagging flaws. The bug I mentioned in my version is a good start. I don't know if it's unique to my disk, but it effectively ruins two-player gameplay, so I'm sending the game to MicroDeal and demanding one that works properly. Also, the game's high score list, which displays the top eight scores and lines with enough space (20 characters) for long, imaginative names WON'T SAVE TO THE DISK. After entering a high score, the disk drive buzzes a bit, but the scores are only kept while the ST is on. I first thought the problem had to do with the write-protect tab on my KarateKid II disk being set wrong, but apparently it made no difference. The problem I mentioned with the Chopsticks bonus round (you know, too long and a tad boring?) is another annoying aspect of the game. To top it off, the game's too easy! The one-player version is simply too easy to master. At first it seems tough to get the hang of the joystick movements, but in no time I was reaching the fourth opponent (and after about 20 hours of play, I beat the Chosen for the first time!). Granted, the bonus rounds and the Secret of the Drum take some doing, but there's not enough challenge.

The real value of the game is in its two-player mode. In fact, my friends like playing it just as much as Championship Wrestling. Of course, I have to get the disk fixed, but otherwise it's a real hit at parties. So don't get the wrong idea. I like Karate Kid II a lot. And it's still fun to play by myself, because I continue to develop better and better fighting techniques. But, as with many games I've reviewed in the past, it has the potential to be so much better. Perhaps the next version will implement a few of the very much needed changes I mentioned. If so, Karate Kid II could be the perfect karate game.

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SunDog Hints and Tips:
The Economics of a Unique Space Game

by Eric Fulmer

Let me say right off that I'm not an expert at SunDog (yet!) or an expert at Economics (I don't even want to think about my Economics grades). However, I've played SunDog enough to know that there are certain ways to go about things and certain ways not to go about things. Hopefully, this will help some of you who might be having trouble.

Although combat is a significant part of SunDog, the game is primarily an economic endeavor. For those of you who bought SunDog for the combat and refuse to assume the persona of a lowly trader out to fulfill his uncle's will, put SunDog away and go buy Star Raiders. But for those of you who've been vainly warping back and forth between galaxies looking for synthesizers or a good deal on cadcams, here are some thoughts:

1) The Price is Right

First and foremost, before you replace those burnt out ship parts, before you get fueled up and fly off to Glory, get out a piece of graph paper and get set up to keep track of prices. A regular 8x11 piece of graph paper will almost work, it's usually a few blocks short vertically, though. Just add another piece to the bottom to make enough room for all the cities. Those of you who like to use your ST for such things can use a paint program to make a custom chart that you can print multiple copies of. You will be listing the vertical (y axis) column items on the left side of your paper and the horizontal (x axis) column items at the top of the paper.

The vertical column will have the city names listed in it. You can alphabetize the city names, group them by planet, by galaxy, or whatever. I caution you, however: only use the names of cities with starports (at least to start). Many planets have three or more cities, but the other cities cannot be reached due to bodies of water. Besides, the city list takes up fifty lines if you use all of them. To make your list, spend some time with the 'MAPS' function of your pilot screen, writing down the names of the cities as you click on them with your mouse.

Once you have the "cities" column done, you can list across the top row all the product names you are familiar with. Start with the ones you need first. In case some of you reading this are prospective SunDog buyers or players who haven't yet located the colony you are to supply, I won't mention the first four products you must always deliver. Suffice to say that they should go first on the chart. Then list the other main ones, eventually filling the top row with products. It is important that when you list them, make each product listing one square wide. Cut the name of the product down to a few letters so it'll fit in the tiny box or use a little icon to represent a product (I used an apple for 'fruits and vegetables,' a tiny steak for 'meats,' etc.) Also, don't forget to make a special column for cryogens. Instead of entering a number in this box, as you will for all the other columns, you can simply put a "y" or an "n" in this column to keep track of which cities have cryos and which ones don't.

Now when you fly off to some exotic city in a remote galaxy, all you have to do is watch the moving row of product names and prices at the trading center, copying the

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two-digit price of each product into the appropriate box. Those who want to keep an accurate chart should also list the "quality rating" of each product (there are various letter ratings from A to G that describe the relative quality of a product. The closer to A, the higher the quality and the price). Now you can have all your necessary information in an easy to read, organized form. Neato, huh?

2) Clean living

I know, I know. Those slot machines are fun to play. Those drug deals in tavern booths are exciting and dangerous. But in SunDog, money equals survival. You simply haven't the time or the resources to waste on such things. If you really NEED to gamble, spend one game just wasting your initial 30,000 or so credits on slot machines to get it out of your system. Then sit down and play for real. The programmers of this game have set up many interesting diversions, but you must try to stick to the primary goal of supplying your colony.

3) Protect yourself

Not just by brandishing a stinger and a shield, but by keeping your cash in the bank whenever possible. The TRANSFER option at each Uniteller is a great way to send your funds ahead of you. Even if you do withdraw all the cash, that's still better than leaving it behind. Being stuck on a far-away planet with no money for fuel and knowing there's 20,000 credits just a galaxy away is no good. The only exception to this is Jondd, the "home" planet you will be returning to many times. Keep at least 5,000 credits in the Jondd bank to cover emergency refuelings and the like.

4) Never Underestimate the Enemy

I've been killed by pirates too many times to count. It is not fun. I don't care if every one of your ship's systems is in perfect shape--one run-in with an Anhillator can change all that. I'm not saying dump your cargo every time. Sometimes I've blasted ships out of the sky without them hitting me once. But other times they've blown my weapons systems to bits and just sat there destroying me while I ran off to fix the wretched things. You just have to weigh the cost of your cargo with the cost of fixing up your ship. Even on Jondd, where parts are cheaper than many places, repairing your ship is a minimum investment of 5,000 credits. Sometimes your cargo's only worth a thousand or so. Don't think that once you've bought something you'll never find it again. There's always more where that came from. Of course, there's always the possibility that you can recover cargo or a bounty by destroying a pirate ship. But is it worth taking the chance of getting destroyed?

5) Around the World in 80 Days

Cross-continental travel is a pain. It wreaks havoc on your Vitality and Nourishment, plus it takes days and days to get where you're going. If you're determined to get to another city, use public transportation (a blue horseshoe shaped building) to go there first. Take a look around, then go back and get the pod if it's worth it. Besides, so many planets are swampy, desolate, or covered with sand dunes. You get nowhere fast on that type of terrain. Stick to the cities with starports at first. The only initial continental travel you must undertake is finding the colony, which can wait until you get your first two loads of cargo.

6) Parts is Parts

Ship parts are important. They're also expensive as hell. I know I've been preaching this meager budget stuff, but some things are necessary in life. One of them is control nodes. You simply can't live without the buggers. You can have a

ship full of shunts but you'll never fly without control nodes In the beginning, when you're getting SunDog shaped up for flight, buy a few extra control nodes and put them in the ship's locker I don't care how careful you are, you'll need the things sooner than you think Besides, they're cheaper on Jondd than just about anyplace else

7) Death and Other Disasters

Game saving is an important feature of SunDog I think too many people don't use it to it's fullest potential Let me put it this way: anytime anything significantly good happens, save the game Don't say to yourself, "I'll just wait 'til I get to that next galaxy," or, "Well, I can only play for another ten minutes, I'll save it then " Believe me, the Gods of SunDog will kill you dead less than three minutes after you say that Guaranteed Besides, in SunDog, it only takes a minute or so to save it and continue. But most importantly, if you do save the game frequently, then suddenly die, you'll only be asked one question. Something to the effect of, "Continue at last saved point?" When asked this question, you might think, "Well, I'd better get my term paper done I'll just click on the 'NO' option " Don't do it. It'll be bye-bye character Always click on 'YES' even if you don't want to continue that character at that moment Only if you want to kill that character for good, click on 'NO ' Comprene?

8) Some Final Notes

A most important thing to remember: don't get frustrated. Especially with those pirates Just think of sweet revenge and where you can get a cloaker Oh, and name your character something unique. There's a certain amount of style involved here Something with "captain" in it like "Captain Crunch" or "Captain Commie" is especially appropriate. Remember, your character is the captain of a star freighter rebelling against being called "Zed" all his life And never buy anything from a guy who tells you jokes about frozen colonists Those guys are real sleazebags Good luck, and may all your cryogenes be found in the very next warehouse!

'Sentimental Journey'

or

'Adios, old buddy'

by John Deni

(I was going to review a game this month, but I was unable to do so, due to reasons beyond my control. Namely, the lack of time on my part because I had to study for what we teenagers term "total and unadulterated death". These killjoys of students everywhere are commonly known to the average passerby as... FINALS!! Yes, ladies and gentlemen, they're back--and no, I'm not going to say "and better than ever". Nevertheless, I'm sure most of you will enjoy the following article, because I'm sure most of you have gone through the same thing. Read on; you'll understand what I mean.)

It was a hot June afternoon in 1982. Two days ago, I had just completed the sixth grade. My dad had managed to get tickets to a Phillies game to kick off the summer and we were just about ready to leave. He and mom called me, an excited, young Phillies fan, into the dining room of our house. "John", dad started, "I think we're going to get a computer." It's difficult to describe the elation of one's childhood dreams come true, but, to put it mildly, I was ecstatic. I couldn't wait to get my first computer. But first, one simple question remained; "What kind?", I asked. Luckily, the company my dad worked for had a company store which sold a brand of computer. Yes, you guessed it; that brand was Atari. On the way home from the ball game later that day, we stopped somewhere between here and Philadelphia to pick it up. I can remember being in that computer store, (the one that my dad's company operated through) looking around and thinking I was surrounded by machines of another world; a world I couldn't wait to jump into. We made the purchase and I was thus the proud owner of my first computer; \$400 for an Atari 800 with built-in 48K and \$300 for an Atari 810 disk drive. (At the time, I wasn't sure what 'K' were, but I had 48 of them and damn, I was happy.)

I can't tell you what my first program did or how it did it, but I can tell you that for those first few moments that the program was running, I was a master programmer. But then a light bulb went on in my head; I had an idea to make it even BETTER than it was before! Total creative power was mine! I could change colors, print every word in the dictionary a thousand times (including profanity), and finally, I could do the incredible--create sound! With most new toys, the original interest and fanaticism dies off in a few days or at most, a few weeks. But with the 800, that wasn't the case. The machine had actually grown on me. (In fact, as I've grown older, my parents have had to curb my use of it because they thought it interfered with my school work. Did it? Nahh...well maybe a little.)

Most of the time, my favorite way to use my computer was to play games. But sometimes I wrote my own programs. I composed all those dinky little programs we all write when we get our first computer. You know--the one that prints your name over and over again diagonally; the one that makes some sound when you press the joystick button; and the one that does some mathematical function, like adding two INPUTed numbers. Eventually, I worked my way up to bigger things and began exploring the rewards and boundaries of 48K.

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I know what you're thinking; "Come on, Deni, how can a person get sentimental over some machine?" Well, know it may sound a bit corny, but I'm writing this with all seriousness. From the time I first learned how to print my name all over the screen, until I explored the seemingly unlimited realms of Ultima IV, that 800's been there to entertain, to teach, and to be a tool in the hands of creator. It's impossible for me to recall all of the times I've used the 800 for homework, term papers, games, or programming. However many it was, the 800 never failed me; in five years of use, I've never been without it due to mechanical problems or any other malfunctions. Like a faithful friend, it was always there.

Back then, Atari was owned by Warner Communications. Atari was just beginning to make its mark on the home computer industry. Now, it is owned by an independent group, Atari Incorporated, and has been the protagonist in one of the greatest come back stories in United States business history. I guess the main point of this reflective article was to say that no matter what new technology is available, tossing the older model is tough; you may be able to buy a Porsche, but do you really want to get rid of the '57 Chevy? Suddenly all the memories of that Chevy pop back into your mind; the first time you drove it, the first waxing you gave it, the first girl you took out in it, or the prom you drove it to. Such is the story with my computer. Two weeks ago, I sold that old 800 for \$50. The more I think about it, it was worth more like \$50,000 to me. Well, goodbye, old friend. Thanks for the memories...and the 48K.